U. S. NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, Rhode Island

BACKING INTO THE WAR:

A Critical Analysis of the Military Commitment to the War on Drugs

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the United States Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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This paper examines the role of the Department of Defense (DOD) in America's war on drugs. It is a critical analysis of the strategy that employs U.S. military forces This paper reviews the military's historical support to the federal law enforcement community and focuses on the Congressional mandate that committed military forces to direct participation in the border interdiction program. The analysis includes an assessment of the effectiveness of the military's efforts and examines those efforts with respect to the traditional principles and concepts that govern the employment of military forces as an instrument of national power. The paper concludes that Congressional action designating DOD as the lead agency for detection and monitoring severely restricted the military's ability to develop an effective strategy; that the strategy is, in fact, ineffective. The paper recommends redefining the DOD role in border interdiction and the development of an effective strategy to support the national supply reduction efforts.

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Abstract of

BACKING INTO THE WAR:
A Critical Analysis of the Military Commitment
to the War on Drugs

This paper examines the role of the Department of Defense (DOD) in America's War on Drugs. It is a critical analysis of the strategy that employs U.S. military forces and it seeks to answer four broad questions:

- How and why was the U.S. military establishment drawn into the drug war?
- Is the military effective in its assigned role?
- Is its role consistent with the principles and concepts that normally govern the use of military force?
- Does its role need to be modified or it efforts redirected?

This paper reviews the military's historical support to the federal law enforcement community and focuses on the Congressional mandate that committed military forces to direct participation in the border interdiction program. The analysis includes an assessment of the effectiveness of the military's efforts and examines those efforts with respect to the traditional principles and concepts that govern the employment of military forces as an instrument of national power. The paper concludes that Congressional action designating DOD as the lead agency for detection and monitoring restricted the military's ability to develop an coherent strategy; that the strategy is, in fact, ineffective. The paper recommends reducing DOD's role in border interdiction and the development of an effective military strategy to support the national supply reduction efforts.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> I have a few years experience in war and I don't think we're in a war. War, defined by Clausewitz at least, is a total commitment of a nation. I currently do not find that.[1]

On September 29, 1988, President Reagan signed the Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1989. In so doing, the President vastly broadened the role of the Department of Defense (DOD) in America's expanding War on Drugs. Perhaps no single issue in recent years has generated more controversy within the military establishment, the law enforcement community or between the news media and the public. The concerns strike at the heart of the Constitution and national security. Should the military be involved in law enforcement? Will it be granted arrest and search powers? Can the military really be effective? What will be the impact on the Nation's military readiness? Or, is this just a political smokescreen by the politicians in an attempt to hide the fact that they haven't got the will or backbone to fight a real "war" on drugs?[2]

This paper examines the impact of the 1989 Defense Authorization Act from the perspective of strategy development. The Act is not significant for committing the military to direct military operational involvement with federal law enforcement forces, but for the *ineffective*

strategy to which it tied expensive military resources. To support this thesis the paper will look at how the Act affected the development of a coherent military strategy to achieve a national objective -- to reduce the flow of illegal drugs into the United States. As a framework for this analysis the paper will address four issues:

- How and why was the U.S. military establishment drawn into the drug war?
- Is the military effective in its assigned role?
- Is its role appropriate and consistent with the principles and concepts that normally govern the use of military force as an instrument of national power?
- Does its role need to be modified or its efforts redirected?

The paper will briefly survey the military's historical role in the drug war, then focus on the impact and implications of the 1989 law. It examines the military's effectiveness in the border interdiction program from two perspectives. First, what were direct military operations expected to achieve? And second, how have the military's efforts been judged thus far? Once an assessment is made in respect to effectiveness any shortcomings will be addressed within the general principles and concepts of military operational art; that is, in the military's ability to apply forces to achieve a strategic goal within a theater of operations. Finally, some conclusions will be drawn regarding the strategy that employs the military in direct support of federal, state and local law enforcement agencies and

recommendations will be made for modifying or redirecting military efforts as appropriate.

As a footnote, this paper will focus on the military's operational role as the lead agency for detecting and monitoring illicit drugs entering the United States. Any other supporting roles will be addressed only in relation to this primary function.

CHAPTER II

DRAFTED INTO THE CAUSE

but in the summer of 1988, a CBS/New York Times poll revealed that more than 6/8 of Americans considered the drug threat to be a greater risk than the less tangible threat of communism.[1]

How and why was the U.S. military establishment drawn into the drug war? The United States Government's efforts to regulate access to narcotics, particularly cocaine, began in the early 1900's with the passage of the Harrison Narcotic Act.[2] From those early years until the late sixties, the legislative landscape was dotted with numerous acts that sought to tighten restrictions on dangerous drugs. Finally in 1970, President Nixon became the first president to declare a "war on drugs" with the passage of the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Act.[3] Five different federal strategies were developed over the next ten years that sought to expand government efforts to curb drug abuse and trafficking. These early strategies were not so much outlines for a coordinated plan of attack as they were summaries of federal enforcement and prevention programs.

The Department of Defense provided information, training, equipment, and other support for drug interdiction activities to the law enforcement community since the early 1960's.[4] The first substantive step to introduce the military into the federal government's counterdrug efforts came on December 1, 1981, with the first Congressional modification of the Posse

Comitatus Act of 1878. These modifications were part of Public Law 97-86, the 1982 Defense Authorization Act, and marked the *formal* beginning of Department of Defense involvement in the national counterdrug effort.[5] The 1982 Defense Authorization Act clarified ambiguities resulting from previous court interpretations of the Posse Comitatus Act that permitted a low level of military involvement in law enforcement activities. However, the Act still forbade any military members of the Department of Defense from direct involvement with the interdiction of any aircraft or vessels or from carrying out any searches, seizures, or arrests.[6] On December 4, 1981, President Reagan further directed the national intelligence community to share information about foreign drug production and trafficking.

The next significant escalation in the war on drugs came in 1983, with the formation of the National Narcotics Border Interdiction System (NNBIS) directed by the Office of the Vice-President. This was the first effort to bring together into a single organization the representatives of the various military services, the federal civilian law enforcement community, and other federal agencies. Several regional offices were established throughout the country with responsibility for coordinating federal counterdrug efforts in their respective regions. These centers were designed to serve as a mechanism for intelligence sharing, operations coordination, and as a conduit for state and local law

enforcement agencies to receive equipment and other non-operational support from the Department of Defense. DOD's first direct operational support to federal border interdiction efforts came under NNBIS auspices:

> By 31 December 1984, the U.S. Air Force was strongly involved in assisting civilian drug law enforcement agencies: such assets as C-130's were deployed to the Gulf of Mexico to carry out surveillance missions; B-52's were collecting information during their training flights; airborne warning and control system aircraft were performing interdiction flights over the Southwest [United States] and Gulf of Mexico; a special helicopter unit was operating in the Bahamas in support of local police; and the Air Force was passing information from the U.S. Air Force/Federal Aviation Administration Joint Surveillance System's ground-based and balloon-borne radars in Florida to the U.S. Customs Command Center, Miami . . . [7]

During its little more than five-year existence, NNBIS accelerated the growth of the military's role in the nation's war on drugs. Finally in September 1988, over growing public concern with drug-related criminal activity, the Congress passed and President Reagan signed, Public Law 100-456, the Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1989. With this Act the Nation's drug problem was officially recognized as a matter of *national security*.

The new law directed the Department of Defense to support national counterdrug efforts in three ways:

- To serve as the single lead agency of the Federal Government for the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs into the United States.

- To integrate into an effective communications network all command, control, communications, and technical intelligence assets that are dedicated to the interdiction of illegal drugs.
- To expand National Guard support to drug interdiction and law enforcement operations.

From this very brief historical recounting, the reader can see that the military's support to federal counterdrug efforts *evolved* over a period of some thirty years. Along the way previously indirect military support was formalized in law. DOD was gradually drawn into the "war" as growing public pressure was placed on the federal government to act. By 1988, rapidly changing global security issues ushered in the opportunity for even greater military participation in the war on drugs. The military was looked upon as an instrument of opportunity. It had the people, equipment, and money to support a larger counterdrug effort. *If the border interdiction effort was perceived as a massive, yet temporary manpower-intensive effort then the military was the most available and capable instrument.*[8]

By 1992, the Department of Defense contribution to the drug war amounted to more than $1.2 billion, with more than 80% of that amount going to support border interdiction efforts. Annually this equates to approximately 117,000 aircraft hours and more than 4,600 ship days. On a typical day in the Caribbean basin, the most active theater of DOD

counterdrug operations, this effort translates into eleven to thirteen ships, twenty-two aircraft, fifteen radar stations and nearly 3000 personnel.

From a budgetary standpoint, DOD's contribution to the Nation's war on drugs soared more than 400% in three years, but was this the most effective way to employ the military's resources?

CHAPTER III

THE MEASURE OF EFFECTIVENESS

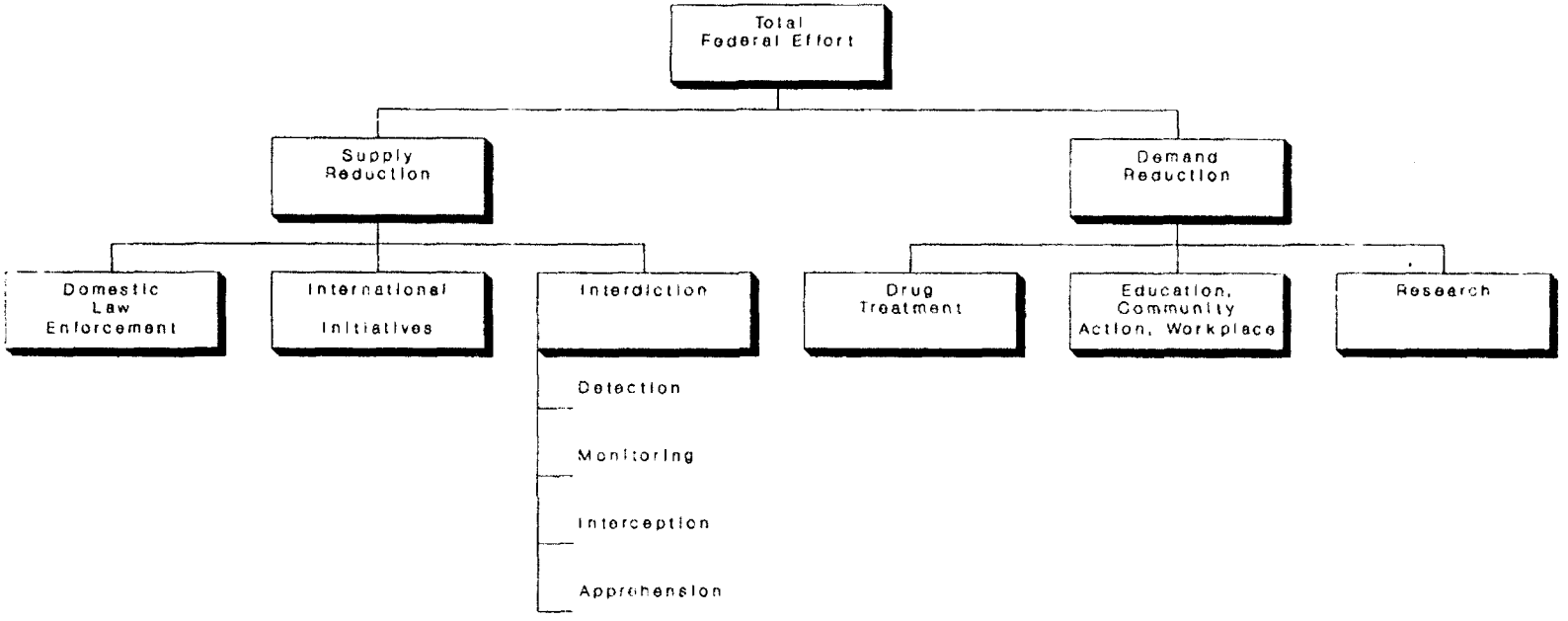
> No progress seems enough. Everytime that we score a gain, somebody seems to move the goal posts, so that no amount of success, no real progress, is credited. It seems the only standard of judgment is complete victory.[1]

Is the military effective in its assigned role? From the discussion in the previous chapter a cynic might conclude that Congress legislated military strategy out of political expediency than a clear, objective assessment of the problem at hand. An optimist might simply view the 1989 Defense Authorization Act as the next logical step for direct military participation in a matter of national security. The truth probably lies between these two positions. In any case, by choosing a specific role and function for DOD rather than directing the military to assess all possible courses of action and recommend the most suitable, feasible and acceptable option, Congress ran the risk of wasting expensive military resources on an ineffective strategy. Indeed, at the strategic level, those efforts are ineffective. To support this contention, this chapter will examine military effectiveness in the drug war within the framework of two questions:

- What was the predicted impact of the military's operational involvement in the drug war, and;
- How are the military's efforts perceived today?

Before addressing these two questions, it is first beneficial to examine DOD efforts in relation to the national program. The federal government's overall counterdrug efforts are illustrated in figure 1. Taken together, it is described as a coordinated and balanced plan of attack involving all basic anti-drug initiatives and agencies: our criminal justice system; the drug treatment system; our collection of education, workplace, public awareness, and community prevention campaigns; our international policies and activities; and our efforts to interdict smuggled drugs before they cross our border.[2] More than forty different departments, agencies and organizations are contributing to the federal program. With minor exceptions DOD efforts focus on the supply reduction side of the strategy and, more specifically within the border interdiction program. It is designated as the lead agency for the detection and monitoring phases of the interdiction program. As illustrated, the two remaining phases of the interdiction process are interception and apprehension. The Coast Guard serves as the lead agency for maritime interdiction in these phases. The Coast Guard and U.S. Customs Service share lead agency responsibility for air interdiction. DOD's non-operational supporting role -- intelligence -- serves to enhance the total border interdiction program. Now that the setting for DOD's role in the drug war has been established, its time to examine the anticipated impact of military operations.

Organization for the War on Drugs



DOD - Responsible for Detection and Monitoring

Coast Guard - Air / Maritime Interception and Apprehension
Customs - Air Interception and Apprehension

From a Congressional and Executive-level perspective it is safe to conclude that DOD's impact was expected to be substantial. In 1988 and 1989, national security was redefined in light of a changing global environment. As previously mentioned, the military was looked upon as an instrument of opportunity. It had the people, equipment, and money to support a vastly expanded national effort.

In the months preceding passage of the 1989 legislation, the outlook for success among the military establishment and law enforcement community was less optimistic. In 1988, neither DOD nor the law enforcement community supported significant expansion of the military's role. There were several reasons cited for such reluctance -- the traditional separation of civilian and military elements of the government, training considerations, foreign relations, and public perception. And of course, there was the matter of "rice bowls" -- the perceived threat inherent in DOD's organizational size and influence in comparison to the supported agencies.

The military and law enforcement community were not alone in their skepticism. Fifteen months before the legislation an extensive RAND Corporation study concluded:

> ....the military should [not] cease to support the drug interdiction program. It strongly suggests, though, that the services cannot be primary interdiction agencies and that *a major increase in military support is unlikely to significantly reduce drug consumption in the United States* [emphasis added].[5]

In April 1988, the Congressional outlook for employing

the military was not wholly optimistic:

> Some members of Congress believe that federal interdiction efforts are ineffective because civilian law enforcement agencies do not have adequate resources. DOD is being looked to as a source for the resources, but opinions vary on what its role should be and whether increased military assistance to law enforcement agencies would be effective.
>
> The issue in Congress is how to satisfy law enforcement resource needs. *The debate centers on whether using military resources is cost effective, whether the resources are adaptable for law enforcement purposes, and what tradeoffs are involved in expanding DOD's role* [emphasis added].[4]

Echoing previous studies, the General Accounting Office was uncertain about the effectiveness of the federal interdiction efforts. Expanding that effort with direct military operational support was equally uncertain:

> [It] is not clear whether more DOD support will achieve significant results or if the law enforcement agencies could effectively absorb more support. While law enforcement officials believe that greater interdiction efforts will achieve more seizures, they recognize that such an increase may not reduce illicit drug supplies significantly, because traffickers have myriad smuggling methods available to counter interdiction strategies.[5]

Both DOD and the law enforcement community were content to see military participation evolve along historical lines, serving primarily as a resource and personnel provider with only limited support in actual operations. This attitude was critical in Congressional deliberations. Military officials went so far as to advise the GAO that *if DOD is asked to expand its then current role, specific guidance from the Congress would be needed.*[6]

The views of the law enforcement community supported those of the Department of Defense:

Although some federal law enforcement officials would like more military support, officials at headquarters and in the field generally agree that DOD's current role is proper and should remain limited to providing support and not involve direct arrest authority. *They see DOD's role as defending the country and do not believe that it should be tasked or allocated resources to do the work of law enforcement agencies* [emphasis added].[7]

In summary, it is safe to conclude that the benefits to be derived from expanding DOD's role in the war on drugs was viewed with some skepticism and apprehension within DOD, the law enforcement community and even among members of Congress and its supporting agencies. However, rising public concern over the problem and a rapidly changing national security picture was enough to warrant the political action that ultimately led to drafting DOD into the war.

If the outlook for greater military involvement was clouded, what has been its perceived impact? Here too, the consensus is not generally favorable. In 1991, the Government Accounting Office concluded:

DOD has given detection and monitoring a high priority, adopting a cooperative, pragmatic approach to implementing the mission. [But] *DOD's detection and monitoring efforts have not had a significant impact on the national goal of reducing drug supplies* [emphasis added]. The failure to measurably reduce cocaine supplies is the combined result of (1) the enormous profits that make interdiction losses inconsequential to drug traffickers and (2) the inability of current technology to efficiently find cocaine hidden in containers, large vessels, vehicles, and other conveyances.[8]

The GAO report went on to echo previous studies in stating its bottomline conclusion:

Interdiction alone cannot raise cocaine traffickers' costs and risks enough to make a difference, regardless of how well DOD carries out its detection and monitoring mission.[9]

A year after DOD's expanded role in border interdiction the outlook for success remained dim. Testimony before the House of Representatives in December 1990 was openly pessimistic. Dr. Peter Reuter, author of previous RAND studies on the subject, concluded that as expected smugglers could adapt quickly to increased military and law enforcement efforts. This was done by changing routes and methods of shipment, as well as, reducing the size of individual shipments to reduce costs associated with potential interdiction.[10]

Despite such disappointing results the total effort was not without its success. Joint Task Force Four (JTF4), based in Key West, Florida and responsible for DOD's interdiction program in the Caribbean, has had substantial success on a tactical level. Since being formed in 1989, JTF4 has supported law enforcement in the seizure of more than 223 tons of narcotics - including 156 tons of cocaine - 455 arrests, and more than 121 aircraft and vessel seizures. In 1991, cocaine seizures in the JTF4 area of operations were up 47% over the previous year.[11] Despite those impressive results however, the overall assessment of DOD's contribution to supply reduction has been judged as negligible.[12]

The fact that the military can point to tactical success in its operations but have its overall efforts judged as negligible, points to a problem that has plagued the interdiction program from the outset -- how to measure

success. The seizure rate over the last four years is impressive, but one cannot be fooled by tactical or operational success.[13] Such statistics cannot be linked to the achievement of the strategic goal. The military forces do represent a deterrent threat to the smuggler, but it is very difficult to measure an activity that *does not* take place. The problem with the interdiction issue is that there are too many unknowns, beginning at the most fundamental level -- drug production. The U.S. State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics Matters is responsible for assessing drug production. In 1992, it estimated that between 995 and 1170 metric tons of cocaine could be produced, but it emphasized:

> *In publishing these ranges, we repeat our caveat that these are theoretical numbers, useful for examining trends. They do not represent what is actually available.* That amount remains unknown.[14]

The fact remains that in order to achieve success one must be capable of measuring it. Commanders, supervisors, agents and soldiers must know the criteria against which they are scored if they are to understand the ultimate purpose of their actions.[15]

CHAPTER IV

SURRENDERING OPERATIONAL ART

> No one starts a war -- or rather, no one in his right senses ought to do so -- without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it.[1]

Is DOD's role consistent with the principles and concepts that normally govern the use of military forces? As we have seen, the consensus between Congress, DOD, the law enforcement community and the press is that direct military involvement in the interdiction program is ineffective on a strategic level. Can one then conclude that there is no role for the military? The answer to that question will be addressed in more detail later in this paper, but the answer must be, "No." The problem of ineffectiveness resides in the current strategy.

To ensure proper and effective employment of the military in the drug war any military strategy must dovetail with, and support, the national strategy.[2] In 1988, when DOD was "drafted" into the war, the national strategy was ill-defined. Illegal drugs have been a law enforcement issue since the early 1900's. The problem steadily grew to epidemic proportions over the next seventy years, but at the strategic level it remained an enforcement concern. Unfortunately by 1988, the military had a long record of active -- though indirect -- support to the federal law enforcement community and the 1989 Defense Authorization Act was a politically viable expansion of those efforts. Despite DOD's valid concerns regarding military readiness, its institutional

resistance resulted in military forces being committed to a deterrent law enforcement strategy. In fact as late as July 1989 the House Committee on Armed Services admonished DOD for being slow to carry out the responsibilities assigned to it in the 1988 Authorization Act, and for failing to include funds for drug interdiction in its budget request.[3] By the time the Secretary directed the regional commanders-in-chief to get "onboard" with the program DOD had lost much of its flexibility for planning effective operations. Operational art -- the means by which military commanders employ forces to attain strategic goals in a theater of operations through the design, organization, and conduct of campaigns and major operations[4] -- was surrendered to Congress with the passage of the Act a year earlier.

Operational art involves fundamental decisions about when and where to fight and whether to accept or decline battle. Its essence is the identification of the enemy's operational center of gravity -- his source of strength -- and the concentration of superior combat power against that point to achieve a *decisive* success.[5] Though operational art is a warfighting concept it remains relevant to the war on drugs. When a military commander is directed to develop a course of action in response to a threat against a U.S. national interest, he must satisfactorily address four questions:

- What military condition must be produced in the theater of operations to achieve the strategic goal -- what is objective?

- What sequence of actions is most likely to produce that condition -- how will the job get done?
- How should the resources of the force be applied to accomplish that sequence of actions -- what resources will it take?
- Is the cost acceptable?

The military commander must also submit his recommended course of action, his strategy, to three tests for suitability, feasibility and acceptability. Suitability asks if the recommended course of action achieves the strategic goal. Feasibility asks if the job can be done with the assigned resources. Acceptability addresses the associated costs and risks.

The military's objective in the drug war, as defined by Congress, was linked to a law enforcement objective -- to *interdict* illegal drugs being smuggled into the United States. That objective was to be achieved by using military assets to detect and monitor drug smugglers with the subsequent interception and apprehension to be executed by Coast Guard or Customs assets. Proponents for direct military involvement believed the substantial capability and availability of military people, equipment and money would guarantee success, thus making it politically acceptable. Unfortunately, Congress may have employed more ships, aircraft, personnel, and other resources to the detection and monitoring role, but it did so without fully assessing their potential

effectiveness. The Congressional "strategy" fails the test for suitability. It does not achieve the strategic goal.

> The United States has persisted . . . in attempting to remove drugs from the pipeline rather than developing a coherent strategy to address . . . long term impact.
> This approach stresses forward deployments of patrol units close to the sources. The return is a high body count of vessels seized with contraband and the arrest of many foreign crews. Unfortunately, the people arrested usually know little about the smuggling organization and the ultimate destination of the contraband. The United States thus removes expendable drugs, transportation platforms, and low-level workers, but the smuggling organizations in the source countries and at home [US] remain viable.[6]

To put it in military terms, the strategy does not attack the drug traffickers' *center of gravity*. The military's effort is relegated to the strategic defense combined with the tactical offense -- resulting in victory on the battlefield without general results for the campaign or war.[7] This is a suitable strategy for a law enforcement organization that by its nature is a deterrent activity. Law enforcement organizations do not generally take proactive measures to preempt criminal activity rather, they seek to deter that activity by their presence and, when necessary, pursue those who have violated the law. Such a strategy contradicts the military's preference for swift, decisive and overwhelming force when employing its resources.

Further weakness in this strategy can be identified when one applies the principles of war to this analysis. Those principles are objective, offensive, mass, economy of force, maneuver, unity of command, security, surprise, and simplicity. The first of these principles, the most

important, is the objective because from it all else flows.' A well-articulated national strategy has been developed since the introduction of the military into the drug war. The objective of the border interdiction program is to disrupt drug trafficking operations to such an extent so as to raise the traffickers' cost of doing business, making the activity unprofitable. Yet, despite the military's participation, the border interdiction program has not achieved its objective. Indeed, it is widely accepted that the smuggler's cost can never be raised to an unprofitable level, therefore the military's current level of effort *does not* support the achievement of the strategic objective.

The principle of the offensive suggests that offensive action is the most effective and decisive way to attain a clearly defined goal. It allows the military commander to set the terms and select the place of confrontation, *forcing the enemy to react.*[9] But the military can take the offense, seize the initiative, only in response to an act by the smuggler. Its role of detection and monitoring is strategically defensive and tactically offensive -- a deterrent role. The entire interdiction process must react in response to the smuggler's initiative. The DOD, Coast Guard and Customs are always in a defensive, reactionary posture against any smuggling operation.

The principles of mass and economy of force suggest that power must be concentrated at the decisive place and time to

achieve decisive results and that a minimum of effort is allocated to secondary efforts. Again, both DOD and the supported interdiction agencies are at a disadvantage. Smugglers respond quickly to interdiction efforts:

> Two tactics employed by traffickers have so far proven immune to the deterrent threat of interdiction. One is the shipment of drugs in containers or in the numerous hiding places aboard large vessels, both of which are exceedingly difficult and time-consuming to search manually or with existing technology. The other is the cocaine air route into Mexico where the drugs are moved across the land border in cars, trucks, containers, and various other conveyances.[11]

The variety of routes, methods of shipment, and unpredictable operations of the drug smuggler prevent military resources from concentrating at a decisive place and time. The limited assets of all the interdiction agencies must be dispersed in order to react to a wide variety of smuggling scenarios. Space and time are expanded to the smuggler's benefit.

From the analysis thus far, it is obvious the principle of maneuver rests in favor of the smuggler rather than with the interdiction agencies. The smuggler can sustain the initiative, expand his freedom of movement, and force the interdicting agencies to disperse their forces to their own disadvantage. At the operational level, interdiction agencies can never set the "terms of battle."

Perhaps the most widely held complaint in the drug war is the lack of any strong coordinating agency to direct the efforts of all involved agencies. There is no unity of command, much less unity of effort. In April 1992, the Senate Judiciary Committee cited continuing infighting among all

federal antidrug agencies with little or no effort on the part of the Office of National Drug Control Policy to establish a well-defined line of responsibility and authority.[11] Both DOD and the law enforcement community were quick to note the inexplicable legislative omission of command and control . . . as long as each side insists on maintaining the autonomy of its own C3I operation, as at the present, there should be good communication and some intelligence, but little, if any, control and no command.[12]

Similar weaknesses can be cited regarding security, surprise and simplicity, but like the examples just presented they are just symptoms of an ineffective strategy. The evidence is clear that employing the military in a deterrent role is not effective against an enemy that does not consider the deterrent to be credible.

CHAPTER V

THE FINAL VERDICT

Thus far, three of the four questions posed at the beginning of this paper have been addressed. The fourth question -- Does the military's role need to be modified or its efforts redirected? -- must be answered with a resounding, "Yes."

On more than one occasion the war on drugs has been compared to the war in Vietnam. It is a good analogy. Like that war, the interdiction agencies, including DOD, have experienced success on the battlefield but with little or no result for the outcome of the war. Like that war too, the military was backed into a war before a coherent, well-articulated national strategy was developed. The evidence presented illustrates the gradual introduction of military forces into the war on drugs over many years. It culminated in 1988 with federal legislation committing military hardware, personnel, and intelligence to direct drug interdiction operations. The manner in which this came about was the result of several colliding forces - public concern over a seemingly out-of-control drug problem; political pressure on the federal government to do something about the problem; resistance, though not wholly unjustified, from DOD and the law enforcement community against direct military intervention into the process; and, a historical pattern of gradually

increasing military support to the federal law enforcement community.

Unfortunately the Congressionally mandated strategy, while suitable for the deterrent mission of the federal law enforcement community, has proven itself ineffective for employing America's military establishment. The question that remains -- Is there a role for continued military involvement in the war on drugs and can it be used effectively?

CHAPTER VI

THE WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

Without a doubt there is a role for the military in America's war on drugs despite the gloomy picture painted in this paper. There is also a role for the deterrent law enforcement strategy mandated by Congress and a part for the military to play in that strategy. From a political perspective, our interdiction efforts send a strong signal to other countries, that the United States takes its importation problem seriously.[1]

In August 1991, President Bush released a wholly new National Security Strategy for the United States, one element of which addresses the drug problem. For the first time it articulated a national objective that linked the flow of illegal drugs into the United States as a threat to our survival as a free and independent nation:

> The United States seeks, whenever possible in concert with its allies, to . . . reduce the flow of illegal drugs into the United States by encouraging reduction in foreign production, combating international traffickers and reducing demand at home.[2]

The National Security Strategy elaborated specific concerns that can only be addressed by employing a proper balance of the national instruments of power abroad. Illicit drugs and trafficking constitute a clear and present danger to the very survival of certain countries, friends and allies of the United States.[3]

Taking its cue from the National Security Strategy, the newly unclassified National Military Strategy of the United States, published in January 1992, cited the combating of drugs as a significant element of U.S. forward presence operations. Though focusing on its current role in detection and monitoring, the strategy is the first step in the military's planning process that formally incorporates counterdrug efforts as a high priority mission. As a result the commanders-in-chief of unified and specified commands are now tasked to directly support this effort. And finally, for the first time, a joint doctrine has been drafted which sets forth the principles, doctrines, tactics, techniques, and procedures to govern joint counterdrug activities and performance.[4]

Clearly a formal planning infrastructure is now in place that allows the military to redefine the strategy. With the end of the Cold War, the U.S. military is about to undergo a massive review of its current roles and missions, which in turn will reallocate resources. The time is ripe for the Department of Defense to seize the offensive in the drug war. It must develop a campaign plan that retakes the strategic offense and attacks the smuggler's center of gravity. That new strategy must clearly articulate military objectives and be able to chart measurable progress in reaching those objectives.

Drug producing and trafficking problems cannot be solved

as long as there is a high demand in the United States and growing poverty and exploitation in the drug producing countries.[5] To attack these problems will require a mix of economic, diplomatic, political and military initiatives. The Department of Defense should keep its focus abroad and put its emphasis on its traditional, but unconventional mission areas -- foreign internal defense, civil affairs, psychological operations, counterterrorism, and unconventional warfare. These are the only activities that can attack the smuggler's center of gravity on a military front and that allow the military to take offensive action consistent with the traditional principles and concepts that have historically guided their use.

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